

RAILWAY JOTTINGS.

On Thursday in last week, while the men in the employment of Mr. Jay, the contractor for the works at the terminus of the Great Northern Railway, at King's-cross, were raising trains of trucks, laden with earth, along a tramway, the ground on which the tramway passes, and which rises gradually to an elevation of between 30 and 40 feet from the site of the railway, suddenly gave way. The spot where this occurred, as we understand, is to the north of the newly-erected terminus, and adjoining the bridge passing over the tunnel formed under the Regent's Canal. A portion of the substratum was constructed of made earth, and there was a strong wall, about 2 feet in thickness, erected as its support: the tramway had been in operation many months. About 200 yards gave way, causing the wall to separate in several parts, when a large quantity of the soil was scattered on the line. The accident is attributed to the great weight of metal on the ground, consisting of rails for the line, about fifty or sixty tons. To repair the damage, it is reported, will cost some hundreds of pounds, should the tramway be replaced.

—Mr. Grainger, of Edinburgh, the engineer of the Leeds Northern line, was so much injured in a collision near Stockton-on-Tees, that he has since died. Others had their legs broken in the same accident, which occurred at a junction, in consequence, it is said, of neglect of signals. Would not a self-acting time-signal fixed on the line have prevented such a collision?—The *Shields Gazette* states, that the use of mirrors on locomotives, as a driver's look-out behind, has been adopted for some time on one of the coal lines in Durham, and that a South Durham correspondent of its own first drew the attention of the British public to the circumstance, many months ago, so that Austria does not require to "hold the mirror up" to Britannia in this point of view.

—The *BUILDER's* self-acting railway gate has been once more "invented," in this case by an inhabitant of Lincoln.—Mr. H. Law, of New York, has made an improvement in the ventilation of railway carriages. The object is to supply them with cool, pure air, free from dust, by blowers worked by belts receiving motion from the revolution of the axles, or from the engine. Mr. Law brings the air in contact with revolving moist surfaces, in troughs below the cars, and they take up all the sand and dust out of the air, and the air is afterwards driven through the cars cool and pure. This reminds us of an old invention, whereby much the same end was to be attained by revolving sheets of water by way of windows.—Mr. Carpenter, of Rome (N.Y.), has made an improvement in the ordinary iron track, to prevent the possibility of a train running off the line. The improvement consists of a middle rail of iron or wood, running the whole length of the track, precisely in its centre, and raised a foot or so above the side or bearing rails. Friction rollers are attached to the engine and carriage beneath, to play upon the sides of the middle, or guiding rail, whereby the motion of each is limited, and any tendency to fly the track arrested. With this improvement, says the *New York Tribune*, the speed may be increased to almost any extent, with entire safety, so far as there would be any danger of running off. In short, without it a railway is incomplete, as much so as a ship without a rudder, or a carriage without a tongue. Mr. Carpenter is fully of opinion that it would be a matter of economy, and for the manifest interest of railway companies to adopt his improvement, as it would not only prevent a large class of accidents, but would prevent the wheels from wearing as they now do, the friction being much less. The idea of a middle track is not new.—Another singular instance of the effects of the extraordinary heat of the weather of late has occurred on the East and West India Dock Railway. The herbage on one of the cuttings at Fingleton took fire from the intense heat of the sun. After blazing away for some time it was extinguished without doing any damage.—Among passengers who left Southampton on

Tuesday in last week for Alexandria, was Mr. Borthwick, engineer, who has gone out (for Mr. Stephenson) to examine the works of the railway now in progress between Alexandria and Cairo. This great work, it appears, is still progressing satisfactorily, the embankments being already formed for a great length of its 140 miles, and upwards of 30,000 native labourers being actively employed.—Mr. R. J. Browne, late assistant manager of the Maryport and Carlisle Railway, has been appointed financial manager during the construction of the Great Railway of Spain, in which it is estimated nearly 5,000,000*l.* will be invested. There were upwards of 2,000 applications for the appointment.—An account of a visit to the works on the Panama Railway has been furnished to the *Times* by Mr. Alexander Wythe, chief engineer of the royal-mail steamer *Trent*, from which we gather that the writer had been along the railway as far as it was finished, and afterwards walked over the works in progress to within three-quarters of a mile of the point where the river Chagres is to be crossed. The bridge has already been built, and its strength tested in the United States, and is now on the way to its destination. When it is erected (in about five months), the line will be opened two miles beyond Gorgona, thus entirely dispensing with the river navigation. The Atlantic terminus of this railway is placed on Manzanilla Island, in Navy Bay, and separated from the mainland by a narrow channel, with 10 feet depth of water in it. The trains start from the wharfs where the steamers lie, and run every day. From the wharfs, in Navy Bay, to Gatun, a distance of seven miles, the country is a swamp, rendering it necessary to pile every foot of the road. This work was performed by steam pile-drivers, at the rate of 250 feet a day in the easiest parts, while at other places, where longer piles were required, not more than 58 or 60 feet forward could be done in the same time. Further along, free-stone of excellent quality is seen in abundance, and is now being largely used in the construction of culverts, and it is intended to replace the bridges over the numerous gullies with this stone. The whole line passes through the wild primeval forest, with all the rank and luxurious vegetation of the tropics. Few of the trees cut down produce serviceable timber, the majority of the palm tribes being soft, and the large trees nearly all hollow, more especially in the swampy districts. Near Tarranilla, the present terminus of the line, the native trees are being converted into sleepers. The rails, 64 lbs. to the yard, are laid on cross sleepers, without longitudinal bulks, a construction which admits of the sleepers being replaced, laid closer together, or lifted without disturbing the road. There is at present only one line of rails, but the laying down of a second or third line, which the great traffic across the isthmus will soon require, will, it is said, be as easy as the first was difficult. Colonel Setton is the engineer-in-chief. A contract has been entered into for the completion of the line through to Panama by the 1st of August, 1853: not more than twenty months have elapsed since the commencement of the work. The speed at present obtained on the line, though at times rising to 25 miles an hour, does not average throughout above 10 or 12. The total rise on the line does not appear to be very great, as at Tarranilla the height above the river is no more than 50 feet. The gauge is 5 feet. There is only one class of carriages, on the American plan, having a communication from each carriage to the driver by means of a check-string running along the roof. The fare to Tarranilla, a distance of 21 miles, is 7*½* dollars, and the earnings of the railway are stated at 30,000 dollars a month.—*Herald's* states that it is now more confidently asserted that the Great Western will pay for the past half-year at the rate of 5 per cent. per annum. It seems likewise to be taken as settled that the London and North Western will divide at the rate of 6 per cent. With regard to the Midland, some contend it will be 2*½* or 3*½*, but those who have gone into the figures maintain it cannot exceed 3*½*, with about 3,000*l.* or 4,000*l.* to carry over.—It appears from a return just issued, that the receipts from all sources of traffic in the

United Kingdom, for the half-year ending 31st December, 1851, amounted on 6,890 miles of railway to 8,247,937*l.* and for the corresponding period of 1850 on 6,621 miles to 7,147,378*l.* The gross receipts on railways in England and Wales for the same period amounted on 5,304 miles to 7,171,551*l.* and for the corresponding period of 1850 on 5,131 miles 6,154,943*l.* The gross receipts of railways in Scotland for the half-year ending 31st December, 1851, on 962 miles of railway amounted to 772,677*l.* and for the corresponding period of 1850, on 953 miles, to 718,023*l.* The gross receipts on railways in Ireland on 624 miles for the same period amounted to 303,709*l.* and for the corresponding period of 1850, on 537 miles, to 274,421*l.* The total number of passengers conveyed during the half-year was 47,509,292, including 5,474,086 first class, 16,710,716 second class, 9,346,397 third class, 15,921,212 Parliamentary class, and 16,980 holders of periodical tickets. The total number of passengers conveyed at the corresponding period of 1850 amounted to 41,087,919. The total receipts from first class passengers amounted to 1,379,265*l.*; from second class, 1,722,626*l.*; from third class, 407,278*l.*; from Parliamentary class, 1,026,651*l.*; and from periodical ticket holders, 42,499*l.* Making the total receipts for passengers during the half year 4,580,827*l.*; and from goods, cattle, parcels, mails, &c. 3,667,110*l.*—total, as above, 8,247,937*l.*

BRISTOL GENERAL HOSPITAL COMPETITION.

I beg to enclose for your perusal a letter which appeared in the *Bristol Times* (written by a member of the Building Committee), respecting the disgraceful proceedings of the committee to decide upon the best designs for the new "Bristol General Hospital."

Since that letter was written, another committee meeting has been held, and so strong was the opposition on the part of two or three members to the whole of the previous proceedings, that the packed majority deemed it advisable to conciliate a little by apparently acceding to the strongly enforced demand of these gentlemen, viz.—that the highest competent authority obtainable, some London architect, of high repute, should be called in to decide; this they more strongly pressed, the whole of the Bristol competitors having sent in a memorial to that effect.

Resolutions.—"That the London architect should see all the designs," and

"That the London architect should see the eight first selected by the sub-committee," as well as other resolutions of a similar tendency, were all negatived.

I should here state that the sub-committee at one of their meetings, resolved to take no notice whatever of the memorials from the Bristol competitors. The fact was, that all the designs except four were taken down and packed up ready to be returned to the owners, and these four were the designs the packed committee, in spite of the strongest protests, tendered, step by step, had succeeded in carrying. Finally, a resolution was carried, apparently just and straightforward, but which in truth their previous proceedings rendered entirely nugatory, viz.—"That a London architect of high repute should be called in to give his opinion on the four designs last chosen by the sub-committee, and recommended for premiums in their report; and that a sub-committee, consisting of the consulting physician (who previously took no part), and two or three others, should make choice of a London architect, and obtain his opinion before the committee met again, the adjournment being sine die. I give the sense, not the words, of the resolutions.

I am in possession of the particulars of the whole of the shameful proceedings of this committee: the squabbling has continued unusually long (since May 11); protest after protest against their injustice and partiality was entered, but before Friday last, without effect.

My object in addressing to you this letter is to obtain justice and fair-play for all the competitors, and to induce the committee to remedy